

## First and Second Language Acquisition



Below is a graphic organizer which gives information on L1 and L2 acquisition. There are also resources listed that have great information about language acquisition and ELL learners in general.

| First Language (L1) Acquisition   |  |
|---|--|
| Factor  | Questions to Address   |
| <b>Age:</b> When does language acquisition begin and how does it progress?  | Language acquisition begins at birth. According to Liberman, within a couple of months after birth, infants can distinguish speech sounds from non-speech sounds. Language acquisition happens in stages and this occurs regardless of what first language is being learned (Pinker). The first step in first language acquisition is the interaction of making sounds and then having needs met that babies begin at birth and use until they become aware that they can use non-verbal communication such as pointing or making noises, they do this until they learn the beginning of speech, making sounds that closely resemble words. Eventually, around 1 to 1 1/2 years old, children learn to say simple words. At around this age children begin to understand that saying words convey meaning, therefore words have meaning. Then words are put together into phrases and sentences (Craig). |
| <b>Sound System:</b> How do young children learn the L1 sound system and the rules of the native language?                            | Young children learn their L1 sound system from listening to speakers of the L1 from birth. They can begin to articulate sounds before they can actually make complete words, but the sounds they make stand for words in their L1. For example, a toddler may say dada for dad or daddy. Children learn the rules of the native language by using the language, researchers also believe there is an innate ability to learn the rules of the native language (Mahoney).  |
| <b>Learning Environment:</b> Where does L1 take place and under what conditions and circumstances does early language learning occur? | L1 learning takes place from birth. It occurs everywhere the child is where people are talking or there is a television or music on. From birth on it is important to talk and read to children as this helps them develop their language abilities. As children start school their oral language ability is already fairly advanced and they will begin more formal instruction in language, including the rules of grammar and vocabulary instruction.   |
| Second Language (L2) Acquisition  |  |

| Factor  | Questions to Address   |
|---|--|
| <b>Age:</b> When does second language acquisition begin and how does it progress?                                   | <p>Second language acquisition begins when a person is put into a situation when they need or want to learn a language other than their native language. This can be in their native country in a foreign language classroom, or this can be in an immigration situation when they are immersed in another language. There are five stages of second language acquisition.</p> <p>Stage I- Pre-production, this is sometime a silent period for the learner, but they are listening and soaking up information.</p> <p>Stage II- Early production, at this stage, students can say one or two words at a time, but the words may not be used correctly. They may have up to 1000 words in their vocabulary.</p> <p>Stage III- Speech emergence, this stage involves students being able to make simple sentences to convey meaning, they may have very short discussions with others, and they will have errors in their grammar usage.</p> <p>Stage IV- Intermediate fluency, this stage involves students being able to make complex sentences to convey meaning, their conversations are also becoming more complex, and they can learn in content areas using L2 with scaffolding.</p> <p>Stage V- Advanced Fluency, this stage involves students being proficient in both social and academic language in the L2.</p> <p>Source: Haynes</p> |
| <b>Sound System:</b> How do second language learners learn the sound system and rules of the second language?       | <p>The L2 student learns the sound system and rules of the second language in a classroom setting, therefore they are learning in a less natural way. The L2 student learns the sound system from listening and copying those around who are speaking the L2. They will also get explicit instruction in grammar.</p>  |
| <b>Learning Environment:</b> Where does early L2 language acquisition take place and under what type of conditions? | <p>L2 language acquisition for children will typically be in the school setting. Some children will have immigrated and will have no knowledge of the native language, others may have been born in the country of the L2 they are learning, but in their homes another language is the primary or only language. The conditions will affect the progress and rate of L2 language acquisition.</p>   |
| <b>Related Factors:</b> What is interlanguage and fossilization and how do these things impact SLA?                 | <p>Interlanguage is a language system that L2 learners make from a combination of their L1 and L2. The interlanguage can help L2 learners better acquire the L2 (Craig).</p> <p>Fossilization occurs when a L2 learner makes a mistake in an aspect of learning the L2 and that error becomes permanent. It is difficult to re-learn or undo this type of error (Craig).</p>   |

## Resources

Craig, D. (n.d.). Introduction to First and Second Language Acquisition. Retrieved from: [https://elearn.mtsu.edu/d2l/lms/content/viewer/main\\_frame.d2l?ou=1933713&tId=18292322](https://elearn.mtsu.edu/d2l/lms/content/viewer/main_frame.d2l?ou=1933713&tId=18292322)

Haynes, J. (1998-2005). Stages of Second Language Acquisition. Everything ESL.net. Retrieved from: [http://www.everythingsl.net/in-services/language\\_stages.php](http://www.everythingsl.net/in-services/language_stages.php)

Liberman, M. (2003). Stages of language acquisition in children. Linguistics 001: Introduction to Linguistics. Retrieved from:

[http://www.ling.upenn.edu/courses/Fall\\_2003/ling001/acquisition.html](http://www.ling.upenn.edu/courses/Fall_2003/ling001/acquisition.html)

Mahoney, N. (2008). Language Learning. *National Science Foundation*. Retrieved from: [http://www.nsf.gov/news/special\\_reports/linguistics/learn.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/linguistics/learn.jsp)

Pinker, S. (n.d.) Language Acquisition. Retrieved from: <http://users.ecs.soton.ac.uk/harnad/Papers/Py104/pinker.langacq.html>

## Additional Resources for Second Language Acquisition

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/> - A great website for students, parents, and educators of ELL students.

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/easl.htm> - Information on what is to aspect from ELL students.

<http://www.everythingsl.net/> - Informative site on many ESL topics.



Sirci Stinson  
McMurray Middle School  
[sirci.stinson@mnps.org](mailto:sirci.stinson@mnps.org)